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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: February 8, 1959

SUBJECT: German Position in Four-Power Working Group.

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Hervé Alphand, French Embassy
M. Jean Daridan, Director, Political Affairs, French Foreign Office
M. Charles Lucet, Minister, French Embassy.

Mr. Robert H. McBride, WE

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Ambassador Alphand indicated to me that he wished to express extreme concern at the position exhibited by the West German delegation at the Four-Power Working Group session now in progress. He said that he and Daridan had been briefed by Lucet on the Saturday morning session of the Four-Power Working Group. He said he hoped that the position taken by the German delegation, as reported by Lucet, was not indicative of the position of the German Government. Lucet said he felt everything the German delegation had said clearly implied a willingness to negotiate directly with the East Germans, and that he believed this was the position to which the Germans were coming. This was also the impression of Manet in a separate conversation.

Daridan said that he was at a loss how to report this situation to Joxe and Couve on his return to Paris. He said he was convinced from talking with Jurgensen and other members of the French delegation that the Germans were taking an even wobblier position than the British. He said that General de Gaulle was taking a very firm position on Berlin, which he had believed was similar to that of the U.S., but that the General would be appalled if he knew how extremely soft the German position was as exhibited here. He said that the only logical conclusion was that the Germans had decided on reunification on terms approximating those of the Soviets. He was at a loss to understand this situation.

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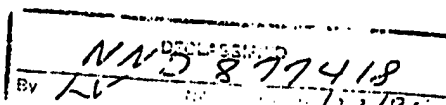
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Both Daridan and Alphand attributed the British weakness to electoral reasons, which they professed to understand. They confirmed de Gaulle's unhappiness at the Macmillan trip to Moscow, which they said de Gaulle had characterized as unnecessary and unhelpful.

Ambassador Alphand concluded that he feared to pass on their impression, of the German position as outlined above, would have a harmful effect on the General's determination to cement close relations with Germany. He thought in the last analysis he would leave this to Daridan's discretion on his return, when he would consult Joxe and Couve to report what the French consider a serious deterioration in the German position of firmness vis-a-vis the Soviets.

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